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in the number and the quality of the attractive performances now given in New York. At what former period have we ever had so many theatres and so many first-class performances?

Mr. Irving's visit will tend to elevate and extend the popular taste in theatricals. He thinks out his representations, and he will make our public think. He takes extraordinary care of the details of scenery, costumes and properties, and he will make our public more critical. The theatrical world moves as well as Galileo's world, and the Americans are becoming the most fastidious, as they are the most liberal, of playgoers.

STEPHEN FISKE.

## Musical Feuilletton.

"The night shall be filled with music."

—Longfellow.

THE cast for the opening night at the Metropolitan was worthy of the occasion. Nilsson in her famous rôle as *Margherita*, Campanini as *Faust*, Scalchi as *Siebel*, Del Puente as *Valentin*, Mlle. Lablache as *Marta*—it is not every day that the operatic epicure has such a menu placed before him. Mlle. Lablache proved to be a competent substitute for Mme. Lablache, who at the last moment was prevented from singing by Mr. Mapleson's injunction, although subsequently the court decided in her favor. Del Puente's performance was the more relished because he too was in danger of being captured by the rival house, although he also succeeded in making his escape. Mme. Scalchi gave her sonorous organ full scope in her unimportant rôle, and received more applause than any other singer, partly because, as was subsequently ascertained, her voice alone reached every part of the house with adequate force. Considerable disappointment was felt in regard to the two leading singers. Mme. Nilsson and Signor Campanini had evidently not yet gauged the acoustic qualities of the house. Their tones did not reach the audience as warm, well-rounded, sonorous entities, but appeared to lack strength and vitality, and therefore failed to electrify the hearers, three thousand in number, who had come with their expectations raised to the highest pitch.

UNANIMITY of opinion in regard to the architectural, decorative, and acoustic qualities of the new house could not have been expected by any one who remembered his "quot homines, tot sententiæ." The popular verdict, however, doubtless was that the house is not a complete success, either socially or musically. Some of the critics asserted positively that the acoustics are perfect, while others denied this with equal assurance. This discrepancy does not necessarily reflect on the competency or honesty of the critics, but finds an easy explanation in the fact that no opera house or concert hall in the world (not even the Leipzig Gewandhaus) presents in all parts equally favorable conditions for hearing. The critics, therefore, official and unofficial, simply bore witness to this fact by their divergent judgments. But in the Metropolitan Opera House these acoustic differences are exaggerated, like everything else. There is no question whatever that the auditorium is much too large.

BERLIOZ wrote an essay on the text that "all lyric theatres are too large." If the architect had read this essay he would have hesitated before he fixed upon his dimensions. He says, however, that he received orders from the stockholders to build a "very large house." That, of course, settled the matter, and as it was built by millionaires for millionaires it was natural that poorer people should not be specially considered. It was necessary to have several tiers of boxes, and to these everything else was sacrificed. The balcony and gallery are up so high that it is quite impossible at that distance to be sympathetically affected by the voices of the soloists or to watch the expression on their features without a telescope. A full view of the stage is afforded only in that part which is directly opposite the stage; and even here brass bannisters and rows of lamps are in the way. On the sides, an adequate view of the stage is obtained only from the first row. All this is very unfortunate, for in foreign opera houses it has been abundantly proved that the gallery is that part of the theatre

on which the cashier can place the most implicit reliance. At the Metropolitan, on the contrary, it has been scandalously empty.

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EVEN the rich man, for whom alone the Metropolitan was built, is not entirely satisfied with the result. Complaints are numerous that the background in the boxes is too light to show off the fair occupants to advantage. A close observer will notice that this is true, especially in regard to blondes, while the brunettes are more favored. No explanation of this partiality has been given, but it is hinted that the architect is a blond himself, and therefore naturally partial to brunettes. Drapery of a darker hue will probably be introduced. An alteration has also been made in the third tier, where the side boxes have been removed and seats introduced for the benefit of those who object to the upper galleries and do not care to pay six dollars for a parquet seat. The first night there was no standing room at all except in the entrances to the parquet, to which access was in consequence rendered very difficult. Mr. Abbey was shrewd enough to see that this would not do. Standing room seems to be as essential to a well-regulated opera house as a good gallery. In the royal theatres of Germany this room is occupied by officers who get admission for a merely nominal sum. In New York the duke, and the bachelor in general, take the officer's place. Recognizing the rights of these individuals, Mr. Abbey had the space behind the parquet thrown open for their benefit. The parquet seats, by the way, are models of comfort. The ventilation also is capital, and in these respects the Metropolitan has no equal in any country. But taking into account the acoustic and other disadvantages enumerated, it is to be feared that it will prove a very expensive luxury to the stockholders. It is to be regretted that the exterior artistic aspect of the building was so entirely subordinated to commercial purposes. In a city where over thirty million dollars of public money are annually spent it is a pity that something could not have been done to secure an architectural monument good for all time.

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It would hardly be worth while, even if space allowed, to write a detailed account of all the performances given so far at the rival institutions. The Academy opened with "Sonnambula," in which Mme. Gerster made her reappearance. Her voice is in better condition than when she was last heard here, surrounded by a host of most wretched singers; and she was received with an enthusiasm which showed that she had lost none of her popularity. The same opera also introduced the new tenor, Vicini, and the new bass, Cherubini, neither of them a great singer, but, as subsequent developments showed, the best of their kind imported by Mr. Mapleson this season. Two days later "Rigoletto" was produced, in which Gerster and Galassi shared the honors. Galassi remains, as heretofore, the most musical and honest singer on our operatic stage. His tone is broad and of beautiful timbre, his method and action are good, and he avoids all stage tricks most conscientiously.

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THE same evening Mme. Sembrich made her début at the Metropolitan and created a genuine furor. Like Gerster she is a Hungarian, and the timbre of her voice, as well as her style, suggests her compatriot. She sings the most difficult fioriture with the ease of a canary, and her tones are pure and clear as silver. The audience was remarkably small, and everybody shook his head ominously at the prospects of the new house. The Academy was crowded—in fact, "Standing room only" was posted up near the door. Abbey's audiences remained small until Nilsson made her second appearance, in "Mignon," in which much applause was bestowed on her. The fulness of her lower notes and their dramatic expressiveness excited admiration, while in the lyric passages those who had heard her a dozen years ago felt that time had but slightly modified her native vivacity. Mme. Valleria sang and acted the part of *Filina* in a charming manner, while M. Capoul marred his impassioned and realistic acting by the transparent tricks with which he endeavors to hide the failure of his voice. At one time perhaps the greatest of tenors, M. Capoul is now clearly out of place on the stage. Signor Campanini, who is somewhat jealous of his laurels, has no cause to fear anything from M. Capoul, but he

must have been troubled not a little after the début of Signor Stagno, the third of Mr. Abbey's tenors, in "Trovatore." Stagno's best notes are in the lower register, but he produced a greater sensation with his metallic and noisy high C. On the whole his method is commendable, and he will run a close race with Campanini, who has not entirely recovered the freshness of his voice and sings all the notes above G with an effort. The Metropolitan has an uncommonly strong list of contraltos—Mme. Trebelli, Mme. Scalchi, Mlle. and Mme. Lablache—all of whom have been received with marked favor.

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IN regard to the orchestra there is not much to choose between the rival houses. Arditì at the Academy has his wind instruments under better control than Signor Vianesi, who, in return, has a finer body of strings. When the full band joins the chorus and soloists on the stage at the Metropolitan the acoustic effect is grand; but very often the accompaniment is too loud, and the singers agreed that they would prefer to have the orchestra lowered in accordance with the original intention of the architect.

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THE number of débutants and reappearances is so large that it is impossible to even briefly characterize them all. It would be unfair, however, to omit mention of Mme. Pappenheim who appeared at the Academy first as *Norma*, in which part she proved somewhat disappointing and then as *Leonora* in which she recovered much of her lost ground. In regard to scenic affairs the situation may be summed up in two lines. The Academy seems to be favored with the original scenery used when the old-fashioned operas were first produced, while at the Metropolitan the stage settings are magnificent and quite worthy of the expensive theatre and high-priced artists.

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THE two great events of the week, ending November 10th, were the production of "Lohengrin," at the Metropolitan and the reappearance of Mme. Patti, at the Academy. The performance of "Lohengrin" was, on the whole, one of the best that has been heard here, although the chorus and the trumpeters on the stage were sadly afflicted with timidity, and the orchestra could only be held in control by the superhuman efforts of Signor Vianesi. The scenery was admired for its realistic and picturesque qualities, the costumes were elegant, and the processions large and well managed. The rôles were in the hands of Mme. Nilsson, Mme. Fursch-Madi, Messrs. Campanini, Kaschmann, Novara and Corsini; and while all acquitted themselves creditably, special praise is due to the two first named. The experiment of having a lowered orchestra was made, but did not give general satisfaction, because it had the result of giving the tones of the strings a veiled and opaque quality, in striking contrast with the limpid purity previously noticeable.

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MME. PATTI chose for her début this time a rôle in which she has never been heard here—*Ninetta* in Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra." Under these circumstances it was a foregone conclusion that the house would be crowded to its utmost capacity. The famous singer was greeted with even more enthusiastic and prolonged applause than in preceding years, and as soon as she had parted her lips to sing the "Di piacer" it was evident that her voice was in as excellent condition as ever. In one sense she is the last of the Mohicans, that is, the last singer who has preserved all the traditions of the Rossini method, which she received from the old maestro himself. The gaudy and giddy ornamentations of this music does not present the slightest difficulty to her. Whether she glides over a barren recitative or revels in the most luxurious fioriture her voice is a constant charm to the ear. The opera itself, which is concerned with the fate of a young maiden who is condemned to death for the alleged theft of a silver spoon which is subsequently ascertained to have been carried off by a magpie, was hardly worth reviving, and probably no other singer but Patti would dare to bring it forward. Signor Galassi shared with Mme. Patti the honors of the occasion. The tenor Vicini was not equal to his rôle; and in general the performance was rather "slow." As a popular success the revival of "Gazza Ladra" cannot for a moment be compared with "Semiramide" last season.

TRISTAN.